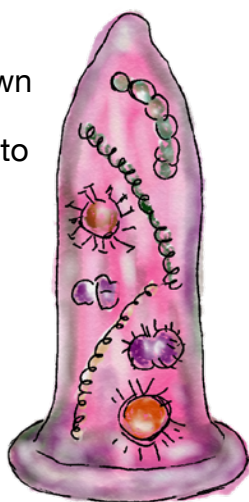


Syphilis

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease which can cause serious health problems without adequate treatment.

It is produced by a bacterium called *Treponema pallidum*. The infection may develop in four stages:

- 1. Primary stage.** A sore appears at the place of contact. It heals on its own in a few weeks. It is not painful so it can be hard to notice.
- 2. Secondary stage.** Skin rashes appear together with other symptoms, like fever, swollen lymph nodes, partially hair loss, muscle aches or fatigue. These symptoms go away on their own a few weeks later.



In some cases, the symptoms of primary and secondary syphilis are mild and may even go completely unnoticed.

- 3. Latent stage.** The bacterium remains in the body for years without producing any symptoms.
- 4. Tertiary syphilis.** Most cases never develop into the tertiary phase. If they do, essential organs like the heart, brain or kidneys can be damaged over the years.

During the phases when patients have symptoms, they can infect other people through sexual contact.

How is it detected?

It can be diagnosed with a blood test or a sample taken from the sore.

If you've already had the infection can you catch it again?

Yes. If you have unprotected sexual contact with people infected with primary, secondary or latent syphilis, you can catch the infection again.

Is there a treatment for it?

Yes, it is treated mainly with antibiotic injections. The dose depends on the stage in which it is diagnosed.

You need to have blood tests after the treatment to check whether it has been effective.



Are there any side effects?

The treatment is generally well tolerated. However, you may experience discomfort or pain at the place of injection, and reddening or swelling. All this goes away on its own. In some cases, you may get the symptoms of a cold, headache, muscle aches or fever, but they go away with rest and a painkiller.